



**National Qualifications 2021
Qualification Verification Summary Report
Scottish Studies: Scotland in
Focus Unit**

Verification group number: 613

The purpose of this report is to provide feedback to centres on verification in National Qualifications in this subject.

National Qualifications Units

Titles/levels of NQ units verified:

H3YP 43	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 3)
H3YP 44	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 4)
H3YP 45	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 5)
H3YP 46	Scottish Studies: Scotland in Focus (SCQF level 6)

General comments

Verification of nine centres was undertaken between February and May 2021. All of these centres demonstrated understanding of the national standard and all centres had their assessment judgements accepted.

Verifiers found that candidates were, in the main, presented at the correct level.

Verification samples across centres included candidate evidence from levels 3, 4, 5 and 6. Some candidates were judged to have achieved a level which had not yet, in fact, been achieved or had been assessed as not having achieved a level which they had achieved. Centres were advised to use the Understanding Standards materials on SQA Secure to ensure appropriate assessment judgements were being made.

Almost all candidates established clear aims which showed how they were broadening their knowledge of Scotland, and completed work reflected these aims in sufficient detail for the candidates' level. Some candidates had aims which needed to be refocused on what they intended to learn about Scotland, and advice was given to centres for those candidates to re-write their aims to ensure they had clearly stated what they intended to learn.

Centres are advised to continue to focus on ensuring that candidates have not relied too heavily on source material and that information is not lifted from sources without re-interpretation.

This year, qualification verifiers saw a smaller variety of activities being undertaken, mainly due to work being completed in a shorter time scale and/or working from home. Verifiers were very aware of the difficult circumstances under which assessment was taking place and saw a high level of professionalism across the centres verified.

Unit specifications, instruments of assessment and exemplification materials

In general, centres were using a full range of appropriate SQA documentation to support candidates to reach the national standard. Some centres were not aware of exemplification of standards on the Understanding Standards section of SQA Secure and were directed to this to assist in quality assurance.

Most centres were using unit assessment support packages available on SQA Secure.

Centres are reminded that SQA offers a prior verification service for centres that devise their own assessment materials.

Evidence requirements

Evidence requirements were understood by most centres.

Use of the candidate and assessor checklists is recommended as an effective way to document assessment decisions and ensure assessment standards are being met. Comments added to assessor checklists proved to be particularly helpful to verifiers; these are not mandatory, but significantly add to our understanding of the assessment of individual candidate evidence.

Centres are reminded that clear aims are required for all candidates, and specific, detailed information about sources and resources is also required.

Administration of assessments

Centres had judged candidate evidence to the national standard effectively in most cases.

Evidence of internal verification was in place in some centres. In some centres, internal verifications systems were highly effective: there was evidence of clear discussion of the standards and of the whole moderation process.

It is helpful for the external verifier to see where assessment judgements have been made. Some centres did this very well, showing where assessment standards had been met through using ticks or annotating the assessment standard number on the candidate scripts. Some centres also had internal verifiers' comments on the candidate evidence, which was very helpful to the external verifier.

Areas of good practice

- ◆ Some centres were using published, or amended, candidate and assessor checklists with detailed comments. There was evidence of good working practices and communication in some centres.
- ◆ Some centres used either a candidate brief or an introductory set of lessons to contextualise learning.
- ◆ The materials centres had created for candidates were high-quality and provided appropriate support to enable completion of all outcomes of the Scotland in Focus Unit.
- ◆ Some centres used logbooks which showed the specific assessment standard covered by the entry. This is supportive to candidate success and helps ensure all assessment standards are covered.
- ◆ In most centres, candidates had a wide choice for their Scotland in Focus Units and had clearly made use of the personalisation and choice the course

allows. Some candidates had chosen local topics, which was good to see. There was an impressive range of topics, which had allowed candidates to demonstrate that they had broadened their knowledge of Scotland: Scottish culture, language, traditions, history, sport, wildlife, etc.

- ◆ In some centres, there was evidence of very well-organised records of the centre's internal verification process.
- ◆ Evidence of cross-marking was available in some centres and there was evidence of clear and supportive written comments on some examples of candidate evidence.
- ◆ Most centres had a clear internal quality assurance policy, and procedures in place showed a focused and organised approach to internal assessment and internal verification.
- ◆ Given the very challenging circumstances in which centres are currently operating, centres are to be commended for their efforts in supporting their young people to produce the work required and also for the well-organised internal assessment evidence provided.

Specific areas for improvement

- ◆ Centre staff should ensure candidates clearly identify their aims in order to achieve assessment standard 1.1 (identifying aims in relation to broadening their knowledge of Scotland).
- ◆ Aims need to be clearly expressed and (for levels 5 and 6) be clearly distinct from each other.
- ◆ Aims should also be specifically focused on how the candidates will broaden their existing knowledge of Scotland.
- ◆ Exemplification of effective, and less effective, aims may help candidates begin their assignments with more focus.
- ◆ Centres should also continue to encourage candidates to record their sources in detail and with accuracy to ensure that standard 1.3 (identifying sources of information and resources) is met. Candidates should be encouraged to ensure that specific sources are clearly identified either in a logbook or in a detailed bibliography.
- ◆ Centres must ensure that the difference between sources (specific websites, books, podcasts...) and resources (the school library, my laptop, the internet...) is made clear to candidates and that both are identified.
- ◆ Use of a variety of types of specific sources is preferred; candidates could be encouraged to use books, TV documentaries, interviews and surveys, as well as internet sources (search engines should not be given as sources — these are resources — specific websites or web pages should be referenced).
- ◆ Candidates should be encouraged to undertake different activities to match their individual skills; while written reports are entirely acceptable, other forms of product are also valid — for example artwork, electronic presentation, talks to peers, interview, group debate, and drama production.
- ◆ Centres should consider using the assessor checklist sheets to record cross-marking and agreed assessment decisions more clearly. Centres should

ensure all assessment decisions made are judged against the assessment standards for the Scotland in Focus Unit.

- ◆ Centres should ensure that candidates are assessed against the correct set of assessment standards.
- ◆ It is also recommended that candidates complete a Candidate Evidence Checklist from the unit ASPs.
- ◆ Candidates should be reminded not to be too reliant on source material. Over-reliance on source material, without rephrasing or re-interpretation, does not show understanding of the topic and therefore is not suitable evidence of candidates broadening their knowledge of their Scottish topic. Centres must clearly instruct candidates to express information in their own words and that material should not be lifted directly from a source unless this is acknowledged. Centres are advised to take a stringent approach to avoid plagiarism.
- ◆ When a candidate's chosen activity is a talk, centres are advised to ensure detailed notes of what the candidate actually says are created and kept, either by the assessors or the candidate.
- ◆ Internal verification of levels should take place and evidence of this should be retained (notes on pupils' work; minutes of meetings, etc) along with the instrument of assessment and marking schemes used.
- ◆ Centres are advised to consider their approach to candidate analysis: the analysis should be of the impact of their chosen topic rather than the reliability of their sources. At level 6, candidates are asked to evaluate the process they have followed and the effectiveness of their chosen method of communication.
- ◆ Centres should ensure that implicit evaluation is given appropriate credit: candidates will often evaluate alongside the information provided. Discussion of the impact, importance or significance of the topic anywhere in the candidate material is evidence of analysis/evaluation.
- ◆ Centres are advised to ensure that appropriate levels of support are given to candidates at different levels: directive support at level 3, support/advice at level 4 and minimal support at level 5.